



Dear Friend:

Enclosed please find information about EPA's work on sustainable travel, tourism and recreation. We currently have three projects underway. The first is a quantitative analysis of the economic and environmental impacts of travel, tourism, and recreation in the United States. The second is the Sustainable Travel and Tourism Roundtable policy dialogue, and the third is an in-depth analysis of mountain resorts and mountain resort communities.

The quantitative analysis is an important first step because it will contribute to the establishment of a numerical baseline of the impacts associated with travel, tourism and recreation in the United States. The study will also provide useful information for state and local agencies, the environmental community and the industry itself to measure its environmental performance over time. The study is a tool that can help EPA and others highlight those opportunities and issues with the greatest potential. The intent is to develop versatile tools that will be broadly available so that decision-makers from many organizations can improve the information on which they base business and environmental decisions. A copy of the study will be available on the website in September, 2000.

The second area of work is the Sustainable Travel and Tourism Roundtable. The Roundtable is an evolving group of industry, government, academic and environmental leaders who wish to discuss developments and take actions to further sustainable travel, tourism and recreation practices and policies. The first Roundtable meeting was held in December, 1998. A copy of the meeting summary is available on the website. A steering committee grew out of this early effort and continues to meet on a regular basis to identify issues, opportunities and shared interests. If you wish to become active in this informal dialogue group, please contact us.

The third area of work explores the application of a sustainable industry model to travel and tourism and recreation sectors. Beginning in early 1998 EPA began work with the mountain resorts industry to identify innovations that simultaneously enhance environmental quality, community interests and business's bottom line. The process involved analysis, community outreach and feedback and ultimately contributed to the development of the National Ski Areas Environmental Charter Initiative. For more information about the Sustainable Industry model, look at our **website at epa.gov/ispd**.

Thank you for your interest and please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

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ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF TRAVEL, TOURISM AND RECREATION IN THE US: DEVELOPING A QUANTITATIVE MODEL

Background

Travel, tourism and recreation are important to the nation's quality of life and economy. Because environmental protection plays an essential role in sustaining travel, tourism and recreation resources, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is working to identify and assess the interrelationships among the environment, recreation and economic health, and to educate industry, governments and recreation participants about these links. To meet these ends, EPA is working to develop a model for assessing the economic and environmental impacts of the travel and tourism industry and the recreation industry.

The travel and tourism and recreation industries are actually comprised of numerous sectors dispersed throughout the economy. The travel and tourism industry is most often defined by its share of the economic outputs (and environmental impacts) of many supply sectors, including but not limited to transportation, communications, power, wholesale and retail trade, hospitality, manufacturing and construction. The recreation industry typically addresses local effects. The scope of this study includes impacts from both travel and tourism and recreation.

A New Model with Economic, Environmental and Participation Data

The approach EPA has taken is considerably inclusive as it accounts for the impacts of the supply sectors as well as the impacts of activities themselves. In this study, we have identified activity-based subsectors thus allowing a better understanding of relatively small segments of the industry that may have similar economic and environmental impacts. For each activity subsector, direct impacts are assessed for the associated travel, lodging, meals, and the activities themselves. Initially the activities included in the analysis are boating, museum and historical places, hunting, skiing and snowboarding, golfing, amusements/theme parks, casino/gambling, conferences and conventions, waterside activities, and fishing.

Economic and Environmental Indicators

The model uses economic and environmental indicators to assess the direct impacts of each subsector. In its current state, the model uses one economic indicator - expenditures on tourism and recreation; and several environmental indicators - water use, energy use, air emissions (carbon monoxide, NO_x, and hydrocarbons), solid waste generation, wastewater generation, greenhouse gas emissions. These indicators are used alone and in combination with other subsector-specific data such as participation rates to provide as much useful information as possible.

Limitations

Because it includes a limited set of environmental indicators and only direct impacts, the current model has a somewhat restricted view of the sustainability issues associated with each subsector. There are also limitations due to limited data, our focus on national versus local impacts, and the presentation of "absolute impacts" versus "net impacts." Eventually, the model can be augmented with additional indicators of sustainability to enhance its value. Positive impacts of travel, tourism and recreation not currently included in the model could be included in the future. The study is intended to provide useful information and a starting point to more thoroughly examine environmental opportunities in travel, tourism and recreation thereby protecting the resource base on which the industries depend.

What to Expect in 2000

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| June | Draft report circulated for peer review |
| July | Revisions to study |
| September | Intended publication of final report |



SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL AND TOURISM ROUNDTABLE

In 1998, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the International Institute of Tourism Studies at The George Washington University (IITS) and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) joined forces to work together to develop and implement sustainable business practices within the travel and tourism industry. As tourism continues to grow into one of the world's largest industries, the collaboration of public, private and not-for-profit sectors is essential to achieving economically feasible, environmentally sound alternatives to many traditional non-environmentally friendly business practices. Because the industry is an amalgamation of many different organizations and supporting industries, this initiative depends upon broad-based participation.

LEADERSHIP IS NEEDED

Currently, a policy dialogue for travel and tourism is lacking at the national level. This creates a tremendous opportunity for new leadership. Early actions for a leadership group could include:

- Identification of critical environmental issues associated with travel and tourism development and;
- Access to information and tools to address critical issues already identified;
- Establishment of a framework and partnership to collaboratively develop solutions to complex issues associated with travel and tourism;

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ROUNDTABLE

EPA, the George Washington University and the World Travel and Tourism Council co-sponsored a Roundtable meeting in December 1998 in Washington, DC. Forty-five representatives from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors joined in a professionally-moderated, hands-on planning session to contemplate where the industry currently stands regarding environmental sustainability, where it should move toward in the future, and how to get there. Roundtable participants crafted a draft "vision" for the industry, as well as discussed incentives and barriers to achieving better environmental results. At the end of the day, the participants agreed on the beginning of a vision statement for sustainable tourism:

"THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY BECOMES A WORLD LEADER AND EXEMPLARY SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY BY WORKING TOGETHER WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS TO BALANCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL WELL BEING, AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP"

While a second Roundtable meeting has not yet occurred, a steering committee grew out of the initial meeting and continues to meet on a regular basis to identify issues, opportunities and shared interests.

Sustainable Industry and Mountain Resorts

One of the interests of EPA's Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation is to identify innovative programs and policies for businesses to enhance environmental performance and stewardship. We do this by taking a comprehensive look at the factors and pressures which make an industry sector tick, recognizing that some factors vary by location, size, supplier relations, customer-base, etc. Identifying these key traits and trends points to industry-specific "leverage points" which *indicate* the best ways to *leverage* business performance to work for the environment.

EPA piloted this innovative approach and its application to the travel and tourism and recreation industries, by exploring issues and opportunities in the mountain resort sector. Here is a brief description of the program:

ANALYTICAL FOUNDATIONS

JULY 1998 TO MAY 1999

We visited industry and stakeholder representatives throughout the country and met with resort owners, operators, managers, planners and developers; federal, state and local government representatives; environmental advocates, community representatives, associations and academics. We analyzed key business trends and their effect on environmental decisions that are made at resorts.

OUTREACH AND FEEDBACK ON FINDINGS

MAY TO NOVEMBER 1999

We summarized all of the information and solicited feedback from industry representatives, environmental groups, and local, state and federal agencies to begin cultivating ideas for innovative projects. The Keystone Center, a neutral not-for-profit organization that specializes in consensus building, facilitated the meetings to ensure a fair and open process.

PARTNERSHIP IN ENVIRONMENTAL CHARTER INITIATIVE

JUNE 2000

Concurrent to this effort, the National Ski Areas Association, with input from several stakeholder organizations, developed an Environmental Charter. EPA has supported the industry's effort to improve its environmental performance and community relations. The Charter establishes principles for a range of environmental management areas, including air quality and waste management. To support implementation of the Charter, EPA will provide technical assistance from existing voluntary programs such as the Water Alliance for Voluntary Efficiency, the WasteWise program, Energy Star, and smart growth with potential demonstration projects on environmental management systems and transportation. Several other Federal agencies as well as non-profit organizations also joined the partnership.

Contact Information

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HOW CAN WE REACH YOU:

If you would like to be on our mailing list, please send (email, fax or mail) us the bottom part of this page. Thank you.

Name_____

Organization_____

Title_____

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Comments: